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municipal recreation bulletin

Ministry of Community and Social Services

Youth and Recreation Branch

The role of the professional

As we move toward the last quarter of the 20th century, millions of North Americans will have more time to spend as they themselves choose. Local governments and community organizations will be expected to provide more and varied programs of leisure activities.

Since 1948, municipal councils in Ontario have been naming municipal recreation committees. As the committees become established and their functions develop many engage a staff and a professional director of recreation to guide growth and advise the committee. In 1970 there are nearly 400 professional recreationists at work in 140 municipalities in Ontario. The role of the recreation professional is demanding and varied; it calls for a mature individual who has completed a degree course at a university, or a two-year post-secondary diploma course.

A recreation staff designs and carries out programs that provide the people of the community with opportunities to become involved in community life, and to use their leisure in ways that enhance their own lives and enrich the life of the whole community.

Though staff members often guide individuals and assist groups to develop better programs, the director of recreation can serve the community most effectively in the role of animator and enabler. Of course, he is responsible for administration and organization of the community program, and must provide for planning by his staff and community groups. He directs the work of the recreation office and supervises the work of volunteers as well as his staff.

To advise the municipal recreation committee and recommend policies and procedures that will meet community needs, the director of recreation must constantly up-date short term and long range plans. He must arrange for regular assessment of the municipal recreation program and estimate the staff and facilities needed to implement the plans that are approved. The recreation director also co-ordinates the work of his department, his staff and volunteers, with that of other institutions and organizations in the community. Only by adequate communication among all the groups can duplication and useless rivalries be eliminated and maximum use be made of the community's resources.

The head of a municipal recreation staff should hold, or be qualified to hold, the Ontario Permanent Municipal Recreation Director's Certificate, Type A, which requires a university degree and three years' experience. In addition to administrative and organizational skills he should be versatile in the area of public relations and communication. He need not be expert in any particular recreation activity, but he should understand the use of leisure and appreciate a wide range of activities. His contribution will be greater if he recognizes contemporary urban and rural social problems and knows something of research techniques and reporting.

In small communities each member of the municipal recreation staff will have to do a variety of jobs. In larger municipalities, where the staff consists of many individuals there can be specialization of role—administrators, program developers, facility managers and directors of special projects.

Recreation staff hired to assist in general administration and program direction should hold the Interim Municipal Recreation Director's Certificate, Type A, which requires a degree, or the Type B certificate which requires the diploma in recreation.

The recreation worker must have a sincere interest in the community and a strong desire to work with people. Enthusiasm, friendliness, intelligence, adaptability, tact, patience, flexibility are the personal characteristics to be sought in candidates for recreation jobs. Good physical health and a lively sense of humor are necessary to meet the demands of a recreation position.

Staff-Committee relationships

The lines of communication among the municipal council, the municipal recreation committee and the director of recreation should be clear to all concerned. Usually the director is directly responsible to the recreation committee, which is the agent of the council. Other staff employed should be responsible to the director. In large departments authority may be appropriately delegated.

Detailed descriptions should be prepared for each job in the recreation department. All policy decisions of the municipal recreation committee should be recorded in a handbook and all copies constantly updated.

The Society of Directors of Municipal Recreation of Ontario has prepared *A Guide to Recreation Personnel Practices* which outlines

appropriate working conditions and discusses compensation for employees in the municipal recreation field.

Professional training

The earliest courses in recreation leadership were provided by the Ontario Department of Education, but for some years the task has been taken over by the universities and by the colleges of applied arts and technology. The department still issues the municipal recreation directors' certificates. The Youth and Recreation Branch of the Department, and the Society of Directors of Municipal Recreation maintain a liaison with teaching staffs and advise institutions that undertake recreation education.

Four-year degree programs are now offered in Ontario at the Universities of Ottawa and Waterloo, and other Ontario universities are considering degree programs. Those graduates of the recreation degree programs who accept employment in municipal recreation qualify for the Municipal Recreation Director's Certificate, Type A.

To help meet the present (1970) urgent demand for qualified personnel, a one-year certificate course is offered at Conestoga College in Kitchener. A candidate who holds a degree in any field of study from a Canadian university may enter this program at Conestoga College, and graduates may qualify for the Interim Municipal Recreation Director's Certificate, Type A, which may be exchanged after three years' successful experience, for the permanent certificate.

Two-year diploma programs are provided at colleges of applied arts and technology—Algonquin (Ottawa), Centennial (Scarborough), Conestoga (Kitchener), Confederation (Fort William), Fanshawe (London), Humber (Etobicoke), Mohawk (Hamilton), Sir Sandford Fleming (Peterborough). Other community colleges are ready to provide training in recreation leadership. These diploma courses equip graduates for employment in program development and facility management. Diploma graduates who enter the municipal recreation field may qualify for the Interim Municipal Recreation Director's Certificate, Type B.

Continuing education

Society is changing and new demands are being made of recreation practitioners. Programs of continuing education are available. Many recreation employees holding the type B certificate will undertake studies leading to a degree and the possibility of qualifying for the type A certificate. Special training courses in administration, supervision, sensitivity and group leadership are also valuable experiences for recreation personnel.

Continuing education programs are offered by many universities, colleges and other educational institutions. Training institutes are provided by the Society of Directors of Municipal Recreation of Ontario and by a number of area recreation associations.

The Municipal Recreation committees should encourage their employees to participate in educational programs and should provide financial assistance for appropriate courses.